



**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON  
FLORIDA

December 20, 2004

The Honorable Mike D. Brown  
Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C St SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Mr. Undersecretary Brown:

Counties throughout the State of Florida continue to be plagued with debris and wreckage more than three months after the last hurricane struck. It is my understanding that no uniform, cost-effective state-wide policy exists to guide our counties as to how to be reimbursed for the debris left by these four hurricanes. Instead, each county has to submit applications to FEMA pleading for the assistance that Congress assumed would be forthcoming when it appropriated \$8.5 billion to FEMA earlier this year. No resident and no county seeks duplication of benefits; rather, they just seek help to get back on their feet. The removal of this debris and wreckage will eliminate an immediate threat to the life, public health and safety of the citizens of Florida. Therefore, I urge FEMA and the Florida Division of Emergency Management to delineate a consistent policy to assist these counties still encumbered with debris and wreckage on their private properties.

By way of example of the ongoing needs of the State of Florida, the county directly hit by the first hurricane, Charlotte County, continues to require debris removal from private property and roads in mobile home and trailer parks, individual residences and non-dedicated roadways. The demolition and removal of unsafe structures from private property also is a problem. The residents of Charlotte County have done everything within their power and personal resources to remove debris and wreckage, but they do not have enough resources to complete the job. DeSoto County also has ongoing debris and wreckage issues and the county is being told more than three months after being hit by multiple hurricanes that they do not have the ordinances in place to allow for reimbursement. After repeated attempts to be reimbursed for private property debris removal, Escambia County sent an application of well over 100 pages to get FEMA to respond favorably to its many attempts to cleanup the county. This piecemeal approach to reimbursement is unfair and poorly services the citizens of my State.

If all counties in Florida were given a step-by-step process for receiving reimbursement for debris and wreckage removal, FEMA reimbursement would be distributed uniformly and in a more

timely fashion. Moreover, each county would be armed with the information they need to get the money they deserve to help their citizens get back to life as it was before the hurricanes.

I look forward to your prompt and detailed response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B" and "N".